

INS Dictionary of Neuropsychology

David Loring, Kimford J. Meador, David W. Lorrington. Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press; 1999. 146 p. CA \$40.00

This is another quality publication from Oxford Press. There are nine section editors and an impressive list of contributors, all recognized senior leaders in their fields. As might be expected, this compact book provides up-to-date definitions on a wide variety of terminology used both in psychiatry and neuropsychology.

The definitions tend to be concise and at maximum are 75 words. This book is greatly aided by reference to original papers or other reference material. For example, the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho educational Battery is not only described, but the original source book is also referenced. The book also accurately reflects some of the controversies in the field. For example, there is a full discussion of Post-Concussional Syndrome, reference to the DSM-IV criteria and comments on some of the controversies regarding the persistence of symptoms.

I have no hesitation in recommending this book as a desktop reference for psychiatrists, psychologists and trainees at all levels. Several of my legal colleagues have also commented favorably on this book, in understanding the terminology in medical reports, which they review. My secretary has also found it useful for securing accurate spelling of the various terms and tests referenced in my dictations.

At approximately \$40.00, it represents very good value for money.

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Executive Skills in Children and Adolescents: A Practical Guide to Assessment and Intervention

Peg Dawson and Richard Guare. New York, NY: Guilford Press; 2004. 125p. US \$25.00 paperback.

Written by a clinical psychologist currently on staff at the Center for Learning and Attention Disorders in Portsmouth, New Hampshire (Peg Dawson, EdD) and the neuropsychologist who currently serves as director of the same center, this book was written primarily for school psychologists and other educational professionals such as social workers, guidance counselors and special educators whose job it is to work with youngsters whose executive skills may be impaired. However, it is written with such clarity and simplicity of language that any teacher or parent will find it useful in preparing children for the demands of the classroom and tasks of daily living.

This working manual is clearly organized in seven chapters which build on each other, from definitions and descriptions of what is meant by executive skills, found in the first chapter, to a variety of techniques used to assess executive skills, as outlined in the second chapter, to the crucial process for linking the identification of specific skill weaknesses to intervention strategies, laid out in the most important, third chapter.

Chapter 4 provides a more in-depth understanding of a broad range of interventional strategies, including environmental modifications, incentive systems to motivate children to use executive skills they may already possess as well as instructional procedures to teach skills they have not yet acquired. There are plenty of colourful vignettes to illustrate how each strategy may be applied to a real life situation. Chapter 5 provides an overview of an umbrella strategy referred to as "coaching", chapter 6 provides a bird's eye view of classroom-wide interventions and finally, chapter 7 discusses executive skills as they may appear in special populations, such as children with acquired brain injury, ADHD, autism spectrum disorders and sleep disorders, including sleep deprivation.

I expected this book to be dry and somewhat daunting to get through and found, much to my surprise, that I couldn't put it down once I had started it. After a brief overview of brain topography and Barkley's developmental model for the evolution of executive functions, the reader is familiarized with basic concepts such as behavioral inhibition, non-verbal working memory, self-regulation of affect/motivation/arousal, behavioral direction and reconstitution (defined as "analysis and synthesis of behavior"), and it becomes quite clear how essential these skills are to develop independent living and problem-solving abilities. The examples of classroom expectations at different grade levels clearly and helpfully illustrate the skills. The chapter covering standardized measures to assess executive functions reads like a review of the literature but the highlight is a very useful list of "Tips for Doing Classroom Observations".

The third chapter, "Linking Assessment to Intervention" is really the heart of this textbook, with very clear Steps in Executive Skill Intervention Planning and very practical templates for outlining skills which need remediation, details of hour-by-hour intervention and monitoring of progress, as well as identification of who is responsible for what, when.

The last three chapters, while more general in scope, emphasize the importance of close collaboration between parents and school and partnership between teacher and student. In the early stages, the authors point out, "It is the job of parents to act as their children's frontal lobes". That's such a great line, I cannot wait to use it in family therapy. I also love the emphasis on involving students in problem solving in the classroom, as well as systematically trying different study strategies during school time and helping each other out in cooperative learning ventures.

The take home message is that executive skills take time and lots of practice to develop, that it's essential to be specific in stating objectives and not try to teach too many skills at once, but the ultimate goal, i.e. a student who can function completely independently by the end of high school, is well worth the efforts of parents and teachers working together.

Great manual, well worth referring to regularly.

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